

II. COUNTY THOROUGHFARE PLANNING PRINCIPLES

Purpose of Planning

There are numerous benefits to be gained from thoroughfare planning. The main objective is to assure that the road system will be progressively developed to serve future travel desires fully. Thus, the main consideration in thoroughfare planning is to make provisions for street and highway improvements so that, when the need arises, feasible opportunities to make improvements exist.

Streets, roads, and highways have two primary functions: they provide traffic service and land service. When combined, these two services are basically incompatible. This conflict will not be serious if both traffic and land service demands are low. When traffic volumes are high, access conflicts created by uncontrolled and intensely used abutting property result in intolerable traffic flow friction and congestion.

There are two major benefits derived from thoroughfare planning. First, each road or highway can be designed to perform a specific function and provide a specific level of service. This permits savings in right-of-way, construction, and maintenance costs. It also protects residential neighborhoods by controlling through traffic and it encourages stability in travel and land use patterns. Second, local officials are informed of future improvements and can incorporate them into planning and policy decisions. This will permit developers to design subdivisions in a manner that will not conflict with the thoroughfare plan. It also will direct school and park officials to better locate their facilities and minimize the damage to property values and community appearance that is sometimes associated with road improvements.

County Thoroughfare Planning Concept

The underlying concept of the thoroughfare plan is to provide a functional system of streets, roads, and highways that permit direct, efficient, and safe travel. Different elements in the system are designed to have specific functions and levels of service, thus minimizing the traffic and land service conflict.

In the county plan, elements are designated as either urban or rural. In the urban planning jurisdiction, the local municipality generally has planning jurisdiction. Outside the urban planning area, the county has planning jurisdiction. In those urban areas where no urban thoroughfare plan has been developed, elements are generally designated as rural and under the planning jurisdiction of the county. When a thoroughfare plan is developed for an urban area that has not previously had a plan, the area defined by that plan is considered to be urban and comes under the planning jurisdiction of the municipality.

Within the urban and rural systems, thoroughfare plan elements are classified according to the specific function they are to perform. A discussion of the elements and functions of the two systems follows.